

GREEK ART IN INDIA.

BY THE EDITOR.

GREEK civilization is younger than the culture of Asia. It flourished when Egypt and Babylon began to break down. It is younger also than the culture of Brahmanism as it developed in the valley of the Ganges. Nevertheless Greek art influenced Indian



A BUDDHIST GIGANTOMACHY.

poetry as well as sculpture, for the very oldest documents of India, in the versions in which they survive, show influences of the Greek spirit. The Mahabharata, as we now have it, has undoubtedly been revised by redactors who knew Greek, for it shows decided traces of the Homeric legend.



THE BUDDHA STATUE OF GANDHARA.



A BUDDHIST ATHENE.

Further, we know nothing of plastic Indian art in pre-Buddhistic times. It may have existed, but no monuments are preserved; and it appears that the ancient Indian worked only in perishable materials, but not in marble or in metals. Here again it was Greek art that gave the impetus to the development of Indian sculp-



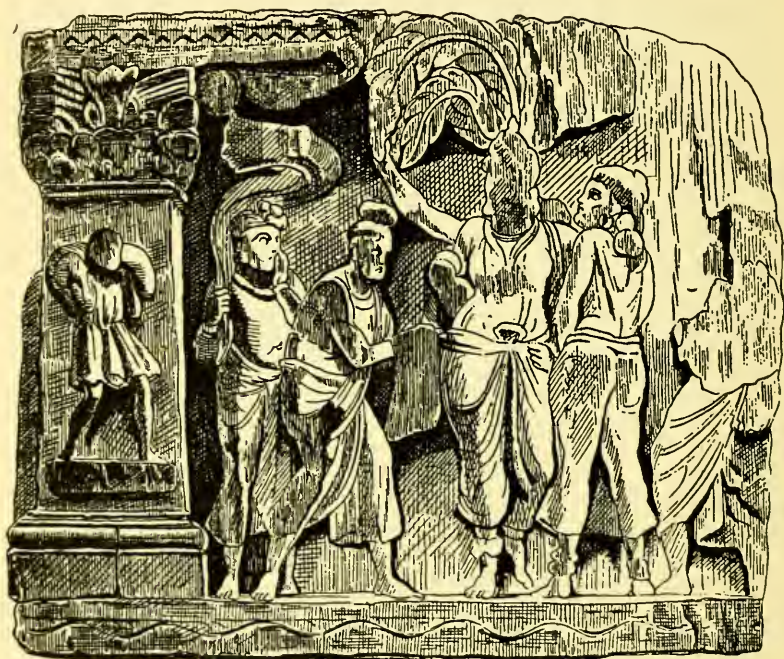
AN INDIAN HERACLES.

ture, the oldest traces of which we find in Gandhara, where the Buddhist converts of Greek descent had imported Greek sculptors to represent in Greek style Buddha and the scenes of his life, including also the tales of his former births.

There is a lesson in the study of Greek influence on Buddhist art which will help us to appreciate the significance of classical

paganism in the origin of primitive Christian art as it developed in the third and fourth centuries of the Christian era.

Ancient Hellas was the center of art inspiration for all its neighbors, and it is strange that the prototype even of the Buddha himself can be traced back to a Greek model which was no other than the god of light and prophecy, Apollo, the leader of the Muses; and the same artists who had chiseled the oldest of all the Buddha statues imported also a number of other Greek motives, many of which continued to live in Buddhist art while others were not repeated.



THE LAMB BEARER.

On a piece of Gandhara sculpture representing the Birth of Buddha.

This latter fate has been met by a female deity closely resembling Pallas Athene which has been found among the ancient ruins, and also by a gigantomachy, a fight of serpent-footed giants with the gods.

Among more recent discoveries we have a perfectly Greek figure of a man wrestling with a lion. This motive has not been continued because it found no explanation in the Buddhist canon. No such scene is reported anywhere in the Jatakas, and so it is like a seed thrown on the stony ground which took no root. This group

is generally interpreted to be a Heracles wrestling with the Nemean lion. The work is more originally Greek than any other piece of sculpture discovered in India, but it is a pity that the heads of both the man and the lion have been broken off, and also the right hand of the man which might have given us a safe clue as to the intention of the artist.

A very interesting motive is the Buddhist lamb-bearer which resembles the Christian Good Shepherd. Archeologists have been puzzled to decide which might have been the original, but this question is beyond dispute in so far as all Gandhara sculptures date back into the second century B. C., and we must assume that both the Buddhist and the Christian types have been revived from an older motive which in pagan Greece is called the ram-bearing Hermes. In Christianity this motive found a good soil in the parable of Christ and the good shepherd who goes in search for and carries home on his shoulders the sheep that has strayed away from the flock. Buddhism, having no such tale among its traditions, seems to have explained this picturesque figure in the sense that the shepherd is carrying home the sheep which the Buddha by abolishing bloody offerings has saved from the fate of being sacrificed to the old Brahman gods.